



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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Jack Buckley, *Director*

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Fred Winthrop, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance/Administration, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife/Acting Assistant Director/Operations, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs, Bill Davis/Supervisor/Central Wildlife District, James Burnham/Program Coordinator, Jessi Manty/Technician/Central Wildlife District, Lt. Col. Brian Perrin/OLE, Capt. Tony Kabir/OLE; PUBLIC: Stan Andriski, Cliff Simula, Norman Carlson, Roy Smith, Raymond W. Simula, Thomas H. Berube, Mel Crouse

ABSENT: Dr. Brandi Van Roo

DATE: October 24, 2017

LOCATION: Royalston Fish and Game Club
50 Main Road, Phillipston, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the October meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:00 A.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

Chair Larson requested the Commissioner's approval to change the August meeting minutes to reflect the fact that Kent's Island, referred to by the Commissioner in his comments, is on the Parker River in Newbury. The Commissioner concurred, and a motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to accept the minutes from the August 2017 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Larson also requested that a change be made to his remarks in the September minutes. Though he did not use the state representative's name at the time, he would like the minutes to reflect that it was the Honorable Solomon Goldstein-Rose. He also requested that Secretary Booth amend her comments on Page 4 to stipulate that the 'dam removal' project she referred to had removed the Turner Dam in Pepperell. A motion was made by Secretary Booth to accept the minutes from the September 2017 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Roche. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson welcomed the public to the October meeting and thanked the attendees for coming to the Royalston Fish and Game Club. He introduced and welcomed Lt. Colonel Brian Perrin of the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and thanked him for attending the meeting. The Chair also thanked Capt. Tony Kabir for attending, and stated that he looked forward to his report.

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Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon stated that he was happy to have attended two wildlife habitat restoration walks in the month since the last meeting. He reported that one was at the Birch Hill WMA, about a dozen people attended, and they had asked good questions. The Commissioner reported that he attended another site visit, at the Montague Plains WMA, with fewer people attending, but in an area that is a very good example of the pitch pine/scrub oak barrens restoration MassWildlife has been doing for the past 20 years.

He also reported that he had attended a meeting of the Massachusetts Outdoor Heritage Foundation the previous week and had spoken to that board about the need for a partner group to receive the funding for some MassWildlife projects. He stated that he had received a positive response and will meet with the board later to discuss a proposal in more detail. The Commissioner also reported on a meeting he had attended with the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association regarding deer and geese eating crops and creating damage. He stated that he had told the growers' association that he would keep it informed about MassWildlife's hearings to be scheduled regarding increased deer hunting in some of the eastern zones. Commissioner Amidon also reported on a Quinapoxet Dam meeting with the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). He reported that the dam does not serve its function any longer, and that the DER has spent over a year researching its removal. The MWRA will finance the engineering and construction, the DCR is the landowner, and it is likely that the parties will move ahead to remove the dam.

The Chair questioned whether the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) will be involved, because it is likely that enough water goes over that dam to trigger the Clean Water Act. The Commissioner stated that the ACE had not been involved to that point.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley also welcomed Lt. Col. Perrin, stated that he was happy to see him at the meeting, and observed that the Colonel is great to work with.

The Director reported that the two regulations the agency has been waiting for, regulating dogs on WMAs and extending the archery deer hunting season, have been approved and will soon be scheduled for public hearings. He stated that there is a Staff-Board Policy Rollout subcommittee meeting on November 7, and he intends to bring the regulations before it to discuss scheduling the hearings, and then will bring the decisions to the November Board meeting on November 9.

The Director reported that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had announced the award of Competitive State Wildlife Grant funds totaling \$490,588 for the conservation and management of the Spotted Turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) and seasonal wetland habitats in the Eastern U.S. He stated that Massachusetts' share will be about \$40,000, and that at least 10 states were involved in the grant.

Director Buckley also reported that Stewardship Coordinator and long-time Statewide Land Agent Phil Truesdell had retired since the last meeting, and that his retirement party had revealed that he has two first names, "Huck" being the other one. The Director stated that Mr. Truesdell had made a big impact on land protection in the Commonwealth, being directly involved in the protection of over 20,000 acres over his career, and would be missed by his colleagues throughout the agency.

The Director reported that trout stocking was winding down and would be finished on the Wednesday after the meeting, with a total of 66,000 trout stocked, and he noted that the start of stocking had been delayed because of the unseasonably warm weather. He also reported that pheasant stocking had begun. Director Buckley pointed out that, looking at these programs, both are likely to need adjustments with climate change, and that staff would continue evaluating both over time.

Director Buckley pointed out that the Board's packets contained a letter, received via email the previous day, from the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, requesting a review of the turkey hunting seasons. He reported that he had already instructed staff to conduct a comprehensive turkey review earlier this month and that it will be brought to the Board when it is completed. The Director also reported that the early Bear season numbers were in, with 148 bears taken in September. This is down from 2016 at this point, when the harvest was 190 animals. Citing the unusually warm weather as a factor in the low harvest, Director Buckley stated that this is still not enough harvest to impact the expanding population. He pointed out that there was still the November season and the deer season as opportunities for bear hunters this year, and stated that the average harvest for those periods is 45 bears. And the Director reported on the preliminary results of 105-110 deer taken in the 2017 Youth Deer Hunt, stating that there were fewer young people participating this year, likely again because of the warm weather. In 2016, 138 deer were taken on the Youth day.

Director Buckley reported that the Hamant Brook stream restoration project was reaching completion and that there would be an informal event at the site in Sturbridge on the Thursday following the Board meeting; all Board members and the public were welcome. He also reported that the Board would find a letter in their packets requesting that MassWildlife give a free license to disabled veterans. The Director stated that he believes most sportsmen would think that was a great idea, but the Legislature needs to pay for those licenses. There are regularly calls for free or reduced licenses for deserving groups, but sportsmen and sportswomen cannot be expected to subsidize them all. He reported that a good model is to make it a half-price license, with the General Fund contributing the other half of the fee.

The Director reported that the Westborough Cronin Building is a location for Toys for Tots drop-off, and that this information will be shared with state and community groups that visit to use the building's meeting rooms.

Vice Chair Roche asked for a review of the pheasant hunting/stocking program. Director Buckley stated that he doesn't want to put too much on the new Assistant Director for Wildlife, and that staff will do the Turkey review first, then he would order a comprehensive look at the pheasant program.

Director Buckley stated that a new report on efforts to establish breeding habitat for the Spadefoot Toad has been issued, and that he will have Conservation Scientist Jake Kubel give a presentation about the project to the Board at the November meeting.

Old Business

USFWS Refuge Issues (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported an hour-long conversation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regional Director of Refuges Scott Kahan, who stated that he wants a seamless process for resolving state-federal issues related to refuges. Mr. Kahan has stated that the USFWS is open to a youth deer day, but the Director was firm that we need to have consistent access for all, and for management of all relevant species and of habitat. He explained that there has been 17 years of process on the Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge, with still no access. The Secretary of the Interior has stated that public access

is important on refuges, which are paid for by sportsmen, but the USFWS's official attitude is another story.

Status of regulations (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that both pending regulations, the one governing dogs on WMAs and the one to extend the Archery Deer Season in some eastern zones, are moving forward, with public hearings in the near future, so he is moving both to the Policy Roll-out Working Group, which is meeting on November 7.

Draft Invasive Species Policy Update (Jack Buckley)

The Director reported that Chief of Conservation Science Jon Regosin and Assistant Director for Fisheries Todd Richards have received Dr. Van Roo's comments and are working on rewriting the draft.

Bird-banders Meeting Update (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley stated that State Ornithologist Drew Vitz is in the process of scheduling this meeting.

Staff-Board Working Group Update (Jack Buckley)

The Director repeated that the Working Group is meeting on November 7.

Mr. Foster requested that the "old business" items on the agenda be revisited, and perhaps not be listed every month. He stated that it was clear the issues are moving, so listing them each month can actually give the wrong impression to people reading the agendas. The Director reported that the new agenda format was created at the direction of the Board. Mr. Sears stated that he agreed, and that he thought the items could be removed. After a discussion, Chair Larson reported that he would look at the agenda and consider how to revise it.

New Business

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

New Hires

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Melany Cheeseman	Endangered Species Review Assistant Office Support Specialist II	Westborough
Pamela O'Hearn	Hunter Education Specialist Game Biologist I	Westborough

Vice Chair Roche moved acceptance of the personnel report as presented; Mr. Winthrop seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous. Mr. Roche commented that the quality of applicants was extremely high, and that this was very good to see.

Mr. Foster asked Associate Director McCarthy how many Hunter Education Program staff the agency employs now, and she reported that the program needs one more backfill to be at full staffing. Director Buckley stated that he will have Coordinator Langlois give a presentation on the Hunter Education Program, which is meeting the needs of constituents, and now needs to find ways make it easier to be licensed. The goal is to extend the program to even more people, beyond the traditional audience. Chair Larson stated that he wanted it known that the people doing MassWildlife's interviews are staff, and that they do a tremendous job, and that one indication to him of this is that positions are only filled

when there is a good applicant pool; otherwise, position will be reposted, and the hiring process begins again. Director Buckley stated that a good example is the Fisheries section now, which is the best it has even been. He reported that some of those positions went out three times to get the right candidate.

Central Wildlife District Activities (Bill Davis)

Chair Larson thanked District Supervisor Bill Davis for attending and stated that he gets Mr. Davis' Central District email every month and highly recommends it.

Mr. Davis thanked Roy Smith and the Royalston Fish and Game Club for hosting the Board's monthly meeting. He remembered former Central District Manager Chris Thurlow, who had passed away the week before. Mr. Davis was able to see Mr. Thurlow a week before he died and reported that he expressed thanks for his work for the Commonwealth and MassWildlife.

Mr. Davis reported that 13,000 pheasants had been released in the Central Wildlife District alone, noting that Technician Jessi Manty, who was present, does a lot of the stocking and an excellent job spreading the birds around for hunters.

Mr. Davis detailed recent District activities, including several moose interactions. He reported that Sergeant Lees, Off. DiGiacomo, and a Worcester ACO did a soft drive to gently haze the moose, named Jed, out of the area. But a few days later the moose came back down and OLE had to immobilize and remove to a more suitable habitat. Mr. Davis also recognized Captains Tony Wolski and Stu Ziembra, who are both retiring.

After a brief discussion, the Chair thanked Mr. Davis for his report.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir thanked Mr. Davis for his mentions of OLE personnel. He also wanted to pay tribute to Captains Wolski and Ziembra, and he stated that the OLE is also losing John Trangese, who will soon also retire, noting that he used to run the dive boat on the Connecticut River to help with search-and-rescue. With these vacancies, Captain Kabir stated that the OLE is down to +/-70 officers. Speaking of the impacts on coverage and enforcement, Capt. Kabir stated that, in the Topsfield area, there are two officers patrolling 64 communities.

Captain Kabir reported two serious hunting accidents since the Board's last meeting and stated that both were due to a lack of concern for safety. He also reported two fatal OHV accidents and one canoeist lost in the last storm. He also reported that three adults had been apprehended after shooting tactical and highpowered rifles on a WMA. The Captain stated that a bow-hunter had called in to 911 from his tree stand on a WMA and reported what sounded like a fire in the woods close by. The individuals are being criminally charged at this time, and no injuries resulted, fortunately.

Mr. Sears asked about ways for the Board to express its support for OLE, Director Buckley stated that he recommended that he and the Commissioner could consult to find out what will be helpful and then advise the Board.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's last meeting was held October 12. The major presentation was from Mass Audubon's Joan Walsh on its latest State of the Birds. A copy was included in the Board's meeting packets.

The Chair reported that it also came out at the meeting that a report called “Climate Ready Boston” is now available that details climate-change effects on sea level, species, etc., and which he thought would be interesting for its analysis of the effects of climate change on a city on the edge of the ocean.

The Advisory Committee was notified that the review of the MESA list has begun again. The wording in the legislation is that the public must be informed, so staff has drafted language for Heritage staff to use in response to calls regarding the public process for input. The Chair explained the process, as detailed in emails included in the Board’s packets that include a list of staff members and the species groups about which each would answer questions. Director Buckley pointed out that once the review is completed by the Advisory Committee, the proposed changes will go through the standard regulatory process.

Board Elections

Chair Larson asked for a motion to turn the meeting over to the Secretary for the purpose of holding the annual election of officers. Mr. Sears so moved; Mr. Winthrop seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Secretary Booth called for nominations for Chair. Mr. Winthrop nominated Joseph Larson; Mr. Sears seconded the nomination. The Secretary asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing no more nominations, Mr. Winthrop moved to close the nominations; Mr. Sears seconded the motion; the vote to close the nominations for Chair was unanimous. Secretary Booth then took the vote for Joseph Larson for the Chair and the vote was unanimous.

The Secretary opened the elections for Vice Chair. Mr. Larson nominated Michael Roche; Mr. Foster seconded the nomination. The Secretary asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, Mr. Sears moved to close the nominations; Mr. Foster seconded; the vote to close the nominations for Vice Chair was unanimous. The vote for Michael Roche for the Vice Chair was taken and was unanimous.

The Secretary opened the elections for Secretary: Mr. Roche nominated Bonnie Booth; Mr. Sears seconded the nomination. The Secretary asked if there are any other nominations; hearing none, Mr. Sears moved to close the nominations; Mr. Roche seconded; the vote to close the nominations for Secretary was unanimous. The vote for Bonnie Booth for the Secretary was taken and was unanimous.

Secretary Booth then returned the meeting to the Chair.

Set Meeting Date

The Board confirmed November 9, 2017, at 1:30 P.M. in the Cronin Building in Westborough as the next meeting date, time, and location.

Members discussed dates for the December Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members decided that Deputy Director Tisa should choose a day for the staff’s holiday potluck luncheon at the Cronin Building in Westborough, and that the December meeting should be held at 10:00 A.M. on that day. Vice Chair Roche moved that the December meeting coincide with the staff potluck; Mr. Sears seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Member’s Comments

Mr. Foster reported that a MassWildlife legend, former Southeast District Game Biologist Dick Turner, had wanted Chair Larson to have a hand-written story by Betty Anderson about her father, and Mr. Foster presented the Chair an envelope containing the story on Mr. Turner’s behalf. Mr. Foster stated that he also wondered if the Board could establish a subcommittee to help with marketing and public relations to get information out to the public. He stated that the Get Ready for Deer Season email put

out by I&E staff was excellent, and that he would like to see more like it and more of such information in general being sent out to the public. He stated that he would like to create a subcommittee to help staff and the leagues share information and get more attention. Mr. Foster reported that he has a marketing background and would like to be involved. Chair Larson then commented about the professional quality and polished look of a MassWildlife presentation he had seen at a recent meeting. Director Buckley stated that the branding materials developed approximately two years ago were used in that presentation and in all presentations that are given to the Board and to the public by MassWildlife staff. Mr. Sears commented that MassWildlife's reports and presentations can be leveraged to share with leagues, clubs, groups, and other outlets, even without narration, as a means of getting information out. Director Buckley pointed out the changing face of information-sharing, and gave the example of Instagram, where now MassWildlife is posting seasonal and topical photos to its own account. After an extended discussion, Mr. Foster stated that he would speak individually to CFO McCarthy, Assistant Director of Public Affairs Larson, and Director Buckley about these matters and report back to the Board.

Mr. Sears reported that Tom Brule is the new Berkshire County League president. He also reported that the Berkshire County League has requested that the Youth Deer Hunt be held over two weekends, not just one. Adams Fishing Club attended meetings.

Secretary Booth reported no comments.

Vice Chair Roche commented that he'd been mostly in New York State since the last meeting. The weather was not conducive to good hunting, but he had enjoyed the trip, and found that habitat manipulation is very effective at encouraging wildlife. He described people he had met at local club meeting there, and reported that he had also hunted with Mr. Foster and Commissioner Amidon during the month, which was very enjoyable.

Mr. Winthrop reported that he was just back from Montana where he saw short-tailed grouse. He was sorry to have arrived late and missed some of the early parts of the meeting, but he had enjoyed Mr. Davis's report very much.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Sears to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 A.M.; Secretary Booth seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its October meeting packets

October Agenda

Draft August meeting minutes and draft September meeting minutes for review

Forwarded email: Dr. M. Nelson to S. Sacco, October 16, 2017; "MESA list changes 2017-2019"

Forwarded email: Dr. J. Larson to S. Sacco, October 23, 2017; "Response to inquiries about MESA list"

Letter from Gregory Fitch to Director J. Buckley, September 26, 2017; *RE* proposed disabled veteran license

Personnel Report

"MassWildlife Central District Activities," October 2017, As provided to the Worcester County League of Sportsmen's Clubs

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2017)